

# Documents on Diplomacy: Resources

## Section II: Articles of Confederation

### Diplomatic & Other Terms

**Abasement** Behavior that belittles or degrades, or lowers in rank, prestige, or esteem.

**Alliance** A formal pact or agreement between nations, especially for the purpose of supporting each other against military threats from other nations, or in times of war.

**Ally** The term used to describe a nation which has entered into an agreement or treaty with another nation for the purposes of mutual support.

**Ambassador** The official representative from one country to another. An Ambassador is the highest ranking official assigned to live in a foreign country for an extended period of time. In the United States, an Ambassador is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The title of Ambassador was first used in the United States in 1893. Prior to that, the highest ranking American diplomats were Ministers Plenipotentiary.

**Articles of Confederation** The first constitution of the United States. Proposed in 1776, the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union were finally ratified in 1781. The Articles proved to be too weak to be an effective government.

**Cabinet Department** A department of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government. Each department is headed by one of the President's top advisors, known as the Cabinet. The Department of State is the oldest Cabinet Department.

**Charge d'Affaires** The member of a diplomatic mission who takes charge of an embassy or legation during the temporary absence of its head. The

chargé may also be the diplomat who acts as head of a country's lowest-level diplomatic mission that is neither an embassy nor a legation.

**Co-hoang/hong** A commercial establishment or house of foreign trade in China.

**Confederation** A group of states or nations united for a common purpose and granting some or most of their political power to a central authority.

**Confederation Congress** The governing body of the United States during the period of the Articles of Confederation, 1781–1789.

**Constitution** The document written by the Constitutional Convention in 1787 that defines the fundamental principles, laws, structure, functions, and limits of the Federal Government of the United States. It was ratified in 1788 and has been amended just 27 times.

**Consul** An official appointed by a government to protect its commercial interests and help its citizens in a foreign city.

**Court of St. James's** The official title of the United Kingdom, used in diplomatic correspondence. It takes its name from the 18<sup>th</sup> century London palace that served as the seat of government.

**Diplomacy** The term is used to describe the practice of conducting relations with other nations, such as negotiating treaties, alliances, or agreements.

**Diplomat** An individual who is appointed by a government to represent its interests and to conduct its relations with another government. An Ambassador is the highest ranking U.S. Department of State diplomatic representative to another nation.

**Diplomatic Corps** Those engaged in on-going or specific official diplomatic efforts. Included are the Secretary of State, ambassadors, and special envoys to other nations and their staff members who support the work of diplomacy.

**Diplomatic Mission** An individual or group sent by a government to conduct negotiations or establish relations with another country. A diplomatic mission can be temporary or permanent.

**Dispatches** Official messages sent with speed between a government and its overseas diplomats or between nations.

**Embassy** The official headquarters of a government's Ambassador and other representatives to another country. It is usually located in the capitol of the other country. An Embassy is the highest level of diplomatic representation.

**Envoy** An agent sent by a government or ruler to transact diplomatic business.

**Foreign Policy** The official views and policies of a government regarding its relations with other nations. In the United States, foreign policy is developed by the President, with the advice of the Secretary of State and others, and is implemented by the Department of State and any other officials designated by the President.

**Legation** A diplomatic mission headed by a Minister whose title was "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary." A legation is the second level of diplomatic representation and is less important than an embassy.

**Letters of Marque & Reprisal** A government license that allowed private ships to attack and capture enemy vessels and then sell them for profit. Privateering was considered an honorable profession unlike piracy, which was unlicensed.

**Minister Plenipotentiary** A diplomat with the authority to represent a head of state but of a lower status than an Ambassador. Until 1893, diplomats who headed American missions overseas only carried the title of Minister Plenipotentiary. The complete title is "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary."

**Negotiate** The term refers to discussions between individuals, groups, or nations that are conducted for the purpose of arriving at an agreement on a particular set of terms or actions.

**Plague** A highly infectious and usually fatal bacterial disease. In earlier centuries, it was often considered a divine punishment.

**Sovereignty** The authority of a state to govern itself.

**Specie** Money in the form of coins rather than notes.

**Supercargo** An on-board representative of a ship's owner, who was responsible for overseeing the cargo and its sale.

**Thirteen Factories** The area of Canton (now Guangzhou), where foreign trade was allowed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was sometimes referred to as the "Thirteen Hongs."

**Treaty** A formal agreement between two or more countries or states, as in reference to terms of peace or trade and any limitations associated within the agreement.

## Historical Events & Places

**Barbary States:** The term used by Europeans and Americans until the 19th century to refer to the states of North Africa, comprising the homeland of the Berber people. It was divided into three political entities: Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. All three were tributary states of the Ottoman Empire.

**Canton** A southern Chinese city, now known as Guangzhou. During the 18th century, Canton was the only Chinese city open to Western trade.

**Empress of China** The first American ship to travel from New York to Canton, China in 1781.

**Fraunces Tavern** A New York City tavern that served as the headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs under the Articles of Confederation.

**Ginseng** A plant tuber (or root) believed to have medicinal or tonic qualities. Ginseng was highly prized by the Chinese and was part of the cargo of the Empress of China on its first voyage to Canton.

**Macao** A Portuguese colony in southern China. Western traders often remained in Macao when the trading season ended in Canton. Macao was the only Western colony in China.

**New York** A major city in the United States. New York served as the capital of the United States under the Articles of Confederation from 1785–1788. New York was also the capital of the United States under the Constitution until 1790.

**Whampoa** The English term for Canton's trading district.